Erosion operations.

25. Fresh orders were issued, in the sense of the remarks made by the Commissioner in Sind in paragraph 3 of his last review, to ensure against unavoidable loss of timber on banks threatened by erosion. The small amount of Rs. 126 spent for the purpose of keeping "cutting" banks clear of trees and to save them from falling into the river was spent in only one forest of the Sukkur Division, and does not represent the real extent of the erosion operations. In the other divisions as well as in Sukkur, the timber as a rule was sold either standing for a lump sum or on reduced royalty to contractors, who bore the cost of felling and removing. The net value of the wood thus extracted (Rs. 5,380), however, indicates that the measures taken were as vigorous as could be expected under the circumstances.

Survey of the river frontage of forests.

26. In order to keep a correct record of the changes due to the action of the river and to enable the Department to see whether, in the long run, by such changes it is a gainer or a loser, the river frontage of most of the forests was for the first time correctly surveyed and its correct position marked on the maps. This was urgently called for, having in a majority of cases never been attempted with any pretensions to accuracy since the original reservation.

Acquisition of *kachas*.

27. The following statement exhibits the success which attended the efforts of the Department in acquiring new formations thrown up in front of and adjoining Reserved Forests under the Commissioner in Sind's Circular No. 1238, dated 11th April 1889 :—

Division.	No. of undecided claims on 1st July 1896.	No. of new claims.	No. of claims decided.			No. of claims undecided on 30th June 1897.
			In favour of the Department.	Against the Department.	Total.	
Sukkur	1	6	5	...	5	2
Naushahro	3	10	9	...	9	4
Hyderabad	1	2	1	...	1	2
Jerruck	* 1	2	2	...	2	1
Total ...	6	20	17	...	17	9

* This claim is for an accretion to the Keti Mahrani Forest, transferred from the Hyderabad Division.

28. It is very satisfactory to note that all the claims preferred by the Department were settled in its favour. A new claim of the year (Sharifpur in the Larkana Range), rejected by the Collector, has been appealed to, and until the decision of, the Commissioner is known, it has been shown as pending.

II.—Forest Settlements.

Area declared Reserved Forest.

29. The areas finally settled and notified under S. 19 of the Indian Forest Act during the period of this report have been already given under paragraph 20, above.

Areas awaiting final settlement.

30. The settlement of the following areas was awaiting the final orders of Government at the close of the year :—

Division.	Civil District.	Name of Taluka.	Area.	No. and date of Notification under S. 4.
			A. g.	
Jerruck ...	Hyderabad ...	Guni ...	976 28	1967 of 14th March 1895.

31. The work left to be done in connection with Forest settlements is summarised below in the form prescribed in paragraph 3 of Government Resolution No. 5068, dated 29th June 1896:—

Areas under different stages of enquiry.

Division.	STAGES OF OUTSTANDING WORK.						
	OCCUPIED LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED.						
	By exchange or compensation.		Land to be notified under Land Acquisition Act.	Land to be notified under S. 4.	Land to be settled under S. 7.	Land to be notified under S. 19.	Total.
	Negotiations proceeding.	Negotiations completed.					
				A. g.	A. g.	A. g.	A. g.
Sukkur	...	...	...	1,794 7	176 37	...	1,971 4
Naushahro	...	...	...	2,773 32	1,618 15	...	4,392 7
Hyderabad	...	...	...	...	9,397 17	...	9,397 17
Jerruck	...	...	...	...	124 29	976 28	1,101 17
Total ...	...	...	...	4,567 39	11,317 18	976 28	16,862 5

32. As there has been no special Forest and Settlement Officer attached to this Circle since the end of March 1895, the different Assistant and Deputy Collectors have been appointed *ex-officio* Forest Settlement Officers in their own respective charges, and the work of enquiry and settlement in respect of the acquisition of lands notified under S. 4 of the Indian Forest Act is entrusted to them. The protracted delay prior to October 1896 in formulating proposals and submitting them with the necessary draft notifications under S. 19 in respect of the lands awaiting settlement is much to be regretted. The papers in several cases have now been with the officers concerned for over two years without any visible results. In the meanwhile, the Divisional Forest Officers, under instructions from this office, continued to remind the Forest Settlement Officers with a view to their settlement being expedited, but as their communications in more instances than one did not meet with a ready response, I took up the matter myself and addressed the different Collectors, pointing out what areas were awaiting to undergo enquiries, and asking their co-operation, which it is hoped will bring forth satisfactory results. Although it has to be admitted on the one hand that—the ordinary Revenue and Magisterial duties besides being always heavy—the officers concerned had, during a great portion of the year under report, to concentrate their energies in devoting their chief attention to the measures for the suppression of the plague, on the other, it has to be remembered that, the longer the interval that lapses between the issue of the notifications under Ss. 4 and 19, the worse is the fate of the areas proposed for reservation, as the reports received show that the tree growth on them, unguarded as it is, is being mercilessly hacked and wantonly damaged by goatherds and other village population.

III.—Demarcation.

33. It is to be regretted that the demarcation of the areas afforested between 1893 and 1895 could not be completed by Mr. Napier, who during the greater portion of the year continued to be Forest Demarcation Officer in addition to his duties as Divisional Forest Officer, Working Plans. The chief reasons for this work having been left in an incomplete state at the close of the year were as follow:—

Demarcation.

(i) The inroads made by the river had so altered the shape of some of the newly afforested areas, while in others the maps prepared by Mr. Barrow were so utterly at variance with the configuration of the ground, that their demarcation could not be undertaken without further consultation with the